

SENATE RESOLUTION 9005

By Akbari

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor the Four Way Restaurant on the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should recognize those exemplary businesses that, through their unwavering commitment to excellence, are a credit to this State; and

WHEREAS, one such notable establishment is the Four Way Restaurant in Memphis, one of the most iconic soul food restaurants in the South, which is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary this year; and

WHEREAS, the restaurant, originally called the Four Way Grille, opened its doors in 1946, when Clint Cleaves, who had been a chauffeur for then-mayor E.H. "Boss" Crump, along with his wife, Irene Cleaves, took out a \$1,500 loan on their house to purchase a space at 998 Mississippi Boulevard; and

WHEREAS, by the 1950s, Irene Cleaves had expanded the restaurant into a front counter with stools that served casual food and a private dining room in the back that sat forty-five patrons, complete with white tablecloths, waiters and waitresses in white uniforms, and a doorbell at the private backdoor entrance, which remained an attraction unto itself into the early 1990s; and

WHEREAS, over the years, the Four Way Restaurant has been known for its hearty soul food—chief on the menu, the daily turkey and best-dressing-ever meal, fried chicken, and delectable desserts—and its rich history; and

WHEREAS, during the Civil Rights era, the restaurant was frequented by leaders of the movement, including Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; in more modern times, under the leadership of Willie Bates, the restaurant has served as a place for the community to gather to discuss fighting crime, blight, and other social ills; and

WHEREAS, other famous patrons over the years include Reverend Jesse Jackson, Reverend Al Green, Johnnie Taylor, Pops Staples and the Staple Singers, Gladys Knight and The Pips, Elvis Presley, Redd Foxx, Aretha Franklin, Ike and Tina Turner, and various others, including many of the artists affiliated with nearby Stax Records; and

WHEREAS, the Four Way Restaurant has been under the capable proprietorship of the Bates Family since 2002, with husband and wife team Willie Earl Bates and Jo Ellen Bates taking over as co-owners at that time; Mr. and Mrs. Bates passed in 2016 and 2019, respectively, and their daughter, Patrice Bates Thompson, has since become the owner, remaining true to the legacy of her parents and the history of the iconic establishment; and

WHEREAS, from its original owner, Irene Cleaves, to its present-day owners, the Bates Family, the Four Way Restaurant has served as a pillar of its community, and it continues to attract guests from around the world; and

WHEREAS, the Four Way Restaurant has been a landmark of the South Memphis community for seven and a half decades; it is most fitting that we recognize this true Tennessee treasure on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we recognize the owners and employees of the Four Way Restaurant in Memphis for their tireless dedication to quality, congratulate them on the restaurant's seventy-fifth anniversary, and extend to them our best wishes for every continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.